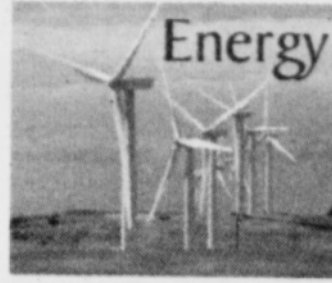




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Modern Day Slavery

Sex trafficking in the City of Roses

BY DREW DAKESSIAN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

When Sherry Dooley was 16, her life was at a crossroads. She had been in and out of 12 foster homes before being adopted at age 3. Two years later a female babysitter molested her. Teenage boys sexually abused her at age 10. She spent the next 6 years railing against the straight-laced, conservative attitudes of her adoptive parents, spending time in juvenile detention and in and out of a group home.

That's when she met him. He drove a red Cadillac and told her something she desperately wanted to hear: She was beautiful; she was perfect.

Dooley had no idea that her boyfriend was in fact a pimp and she spent the next 16 years of her life walking Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, then Union Avenue, to support herself and the son that she had by her second pimp.

Dooley's story isn't unique. In 2008, a national FBI sting of 30 cities determined Portland to be second only to Seattle in prolificacy of domestic minor sex trafficking, better known as child prostitution. The Portland Police Bureau reports five cases of trafficking each week. And these figures may not accurately reflect the problem because they take into account only the victims that have been rescued.

Most experts and stakeholders say that Portland's location on the I-5 corridor is to blame for its reputation as a hub for domestic minor sex trafficking. But other factors are at work as well.

"Port cities typically [have a] higher incidence of trafficking. A landlocked state...won't have that population," says James Pond, founder of Transitions Global, a Hillsboro-based non-governmental organization that provides rehabilitation services to survivors of sex trafficking.

Visitors are not the only ones who are soliciting sex from underage girls.

Linda Smith, founder of the anti-sex trafficking non-profit Shared Hope International, believes that Portland's permissive attitude toward the sex has incited the desire for new and illicit forms of sexual activity among citizens.

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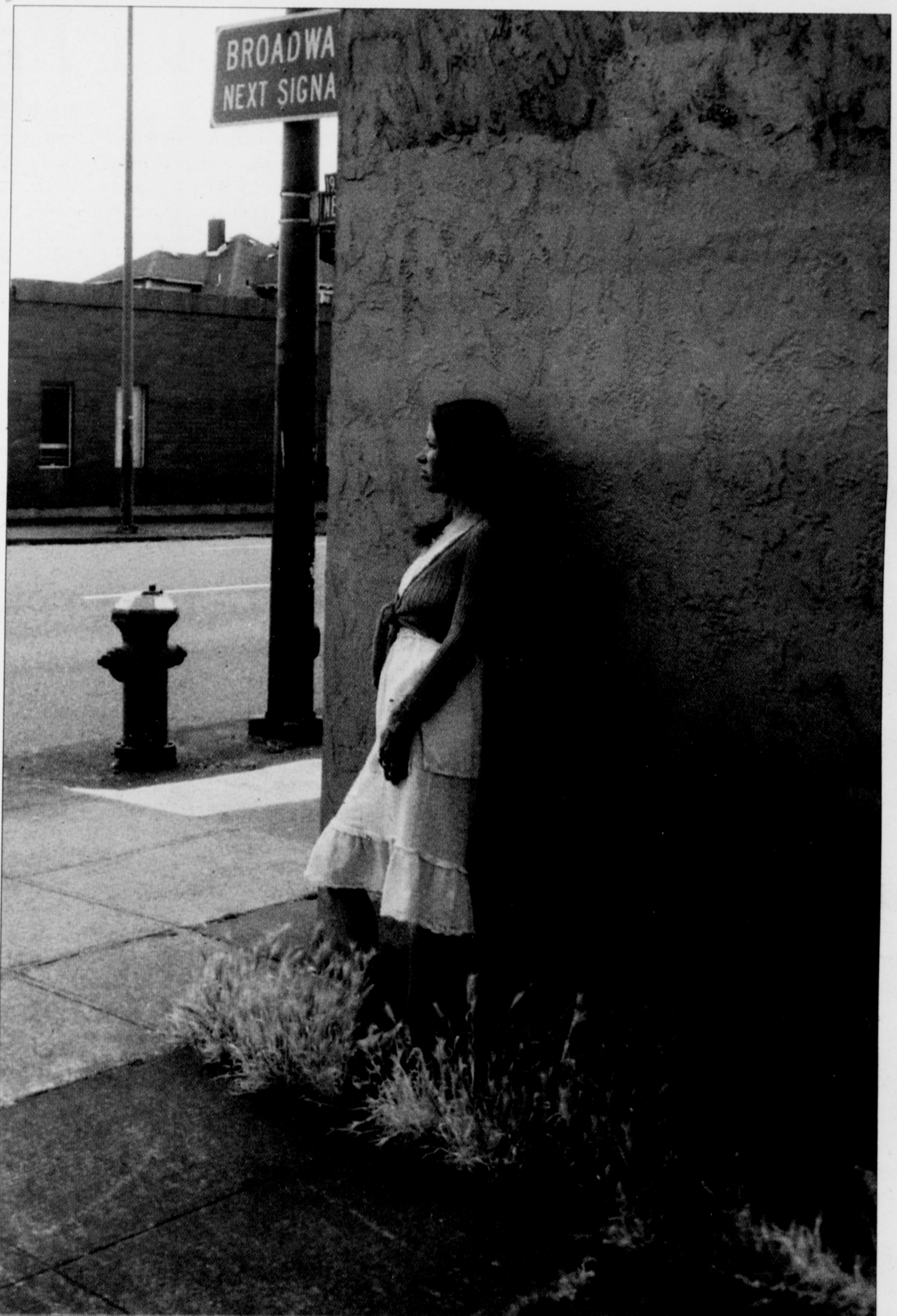


PHOTO BY DREW DAKESSIAN/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Sex trafficking survivor Sherry Dooley looks out at Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard where she prostituted herself for years.